The Interspecies Newsletter

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On Their Own Behalf

Readers responded warmly to the last newsletter's account of whale and dolphin taxonomy. A few asked me to print more excerpts from my next book, The Charged Border, Where Human Nature Meets Whales and Dolphins, *which Henry Holt will publish next spring. Sure, why not? Here's part of another chapter that focuses on the horror of whaling, and how it fomented The Save the Whales Movement which, itself, evolved into the Environmental Movement.*

–Jim Nollman, May 98

What good is a used up world and how could it be worth having?

–Sting

No matter how luminous the whales and dolphins may appear to us today, it is the dark, festering topic of whaling that dominates our historical relationship with cetaceans. Until a mere thirty years ago, human beings were involved in a mass slaughter of whales that left several species at the brink of extinction, a precipice from which several of them have never fully recovered. Today, the clamor to resume whaling remains loud in the halls where resource policies are legislated.

The actual holocaust of the great whales is an historic event that began in the middle of the fifteenth century. Before that time neither the technology nor the will was of a sufficient capacity to pursue such large animals on the open ocean. Nonetheless, human beings have killed cetaceans for thousands of years, although ancient whalers sought their prey only when they ventured close to shore, or were stranded to provide a local windfall. Coastal tribes ate whale meat and burned the oil in their lamps. Northern people used the rib cages as framing material for house construction. The baleen plates in the whale's mouth provided a durable material that was springy and light. Beluga whale skins provided a high grade of white leather, and raw blubber was the primary source for vitamin C in the far North. The Arctic narwhal provided a spiraling ivory tooth up to ten feet long which upheld the medieval myth of the unicorn.

To understand the rush to industrial whaling, it is essential to recognize that oil derived from petroleum products only became generally avaliable after the middle of the 19th century. Before that time, people relied on vegetable oil to light their lamps. Whale oil burned just as well, but it was far more expensive to acquire. This changed after the Basques people of Northern Spain perfected the design of whaleboats and the methodology of pursuit in the fourteenth century. They began their whaling adventure on the Bay of Biscay, pursuing the right whale which, as a slow swimmer, was the easiest species to harpoon. Unlike most cetacean species that sank when killed, this was the "right" whale for staying afloat.

Whaling played a crucial role in the colonial expansion of Europe. A map drawn in 1413 entitled *Carta Catalán de Mecia de Viladestes* shows a Basque caravel hunting a whale on the sea far northwest of Iceland. Some historians believe the Basques hunted bowhead whales along the east coast of Canada half a century before Columbus landed in the West Indies. In the sixteenth century, the Basques captain, Francois Sopite Zaburu, hit on the ingenious idea of building a stove right on deck to render whale blubber into oil

and store it in barrels for months at a time. This invention completely freed the whalers from their onshore facilities, while the early rumblings of the Industrial Revolution produced an increasing number of new machines that needed lubricating oil. Dutch whalers started exploring the New World. French whalers tapped the seemingly bottomless marine mammal resource in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, an action that eventually led to the French colonization of Canada. The Basques, more tribe than nation, eventually lagged behind as European industry came to depend upon stable supplies of whale oil.

When the right whale population declined from overhunting off the coast of Western Europe, a Dutch businessman learned from a Basque whaling captain that vast herds of bowhead whales congregated around the remote Arctic island of Spitsbergen located above the north coast of Norway. In 1625, a wealthy Dutchman built Smeerenburg or Blubber town, installing a massive platform for dragging whales whole out of the water and dumping the bodies directly into a giant pressure cooker. The process was quick and efficient, producing a half dozen grades of oil, animal feed, and high-grade fertilizer. Between 1675-1721, the Dutch recorded a kill of thirty-three thousand whales. The unrelenting pressure of the hunt eventually caused the bowhead population off Spitzbergen to collapse.

Over the next hundred and fifty years, larger boats from several European nations explored distant oceans and different species. Advances in winching technology finally made it possible to pursue species whose bodies sink after death. The British focused on humpbacks in the Hawaiian Islands as well as the thirty-five foot bottlenose whales that once thrived off the northeast coast of Scotland. On a tip from a Chinese pilot, the American, Joseph Scammon, learned that gray whales congregate in the shallow lagoons of Baja California. Within thirty years, the grays were commercially extinct. The bottlenose whales soon followed. The Hawaiian humpback population was devastated. Unique in the annals of whaling, the gray population actually recovered, was hunted a second time, then crashed again.

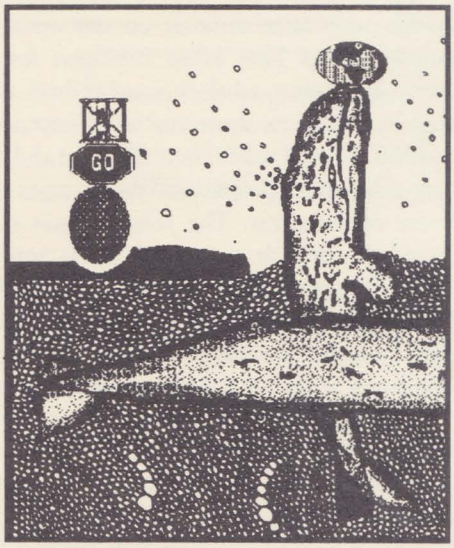
Thomas Edison

It was Nantucketers who figured out an efficient method to hunt the powerfully muscled, deep-diving, and lucrative sperm whale. The sperms quickly became the "right" whale, at least for Americans, by virtue of several superlative products rendered from its body parts. Although the flesh of this creature is considered inedible by humans, the average-sized sperm whale yields more oil of a higher grade, by body weight, than any other whale. The peg-like teeth protruding from the lower jaw are ivory. Ambergris, a waxy excretion from the whale's large intestine, and composed of the partially digested remains of squid beaks, was a major component of fine perfume. The most valuable product was spermaceti.

The discovery of petroleum in Pennsylvania in 1859 led to a new, inexpensive source of machine oil. The Civil War interceded, causing the sperm whaling industry to lose its work force and its capital, neither of which it was able to recover after peace was won. Lamp oil, rendered first from the blubber of right whales, then bowheads, and finally sperms turned night into day, lit factories and homes until Edison destroyed the market forever with his invention and subsequent marketing of the electric light bulb in the 1870s, incidentally turning the inventor into the greatest whale saver in history. For all these reasons, the sperm whale hunt tapered off just as the species became depleted to the point of commercial extinction. The hunt resumed again just before the Second World War, now focused primarily on acquiring spermaceti. In the 1957-58 season, a total of 18,853 sperm whales were taken, mostly by Japanese and Norwegians. In the last year they were hunted, 1979-80, whalers took 2,203. Since then sperm whales have been granted a full reprieve, and the species has rebounded to certain extent.

The mysticetes) have not been so fortunate. At the end of the nineteenth century, there were not enough baleen whales anywhere in the known world to support a continuation of the hunt. The fleets of "whalebone whalers" rusted in their moorings. Then, during the first years of the new century, almost too improbably, explorers reported sighting vast, unexploited herds of *rorquals*–the family of whalebone whales that includes blues and their smaller look alikes, the fins, the bryde's, the seis–swimming off the remote coast of Antarctica. Huge factory ships were built capable of slicing up a hundred foot blue whale in just a few hours. Advances in refrigeration technology permitted the meat to be stored for the duration of the voyage, transforming it from a local and seasonal speciality into an item of mass global marketing. New harpoons were introduced equipped with exploding tips and shot from cannons mounted on the decks of catcher boats. Air hoses kept the carcasses afloat.

Antarctica became the whaler's motherlode, the site of a systematic slaughter that outdid every previous hunt by efficiency if not by ferocity. Administered first by Norwegians, and subsidized by British and Greek capital--Aristotle Onassis was a major investor--and later enjoined by the Japanese, the Antarctic "fishery" yielded, at its peak, a whale every twelve minutes. The blues, most massive and most valuable of the rorquals, were the first to vanish. The industry then targeted the next in size, the fins. They vanished. Next came the seis, which eventually vanished as well. Then the brydes. Today, Japanese whalers still venture into Antarctic waters to hunt the last healthy population of rorquals, the thirty-foot minke whale, despite an overwhelming vote by the International Whaling Commission to



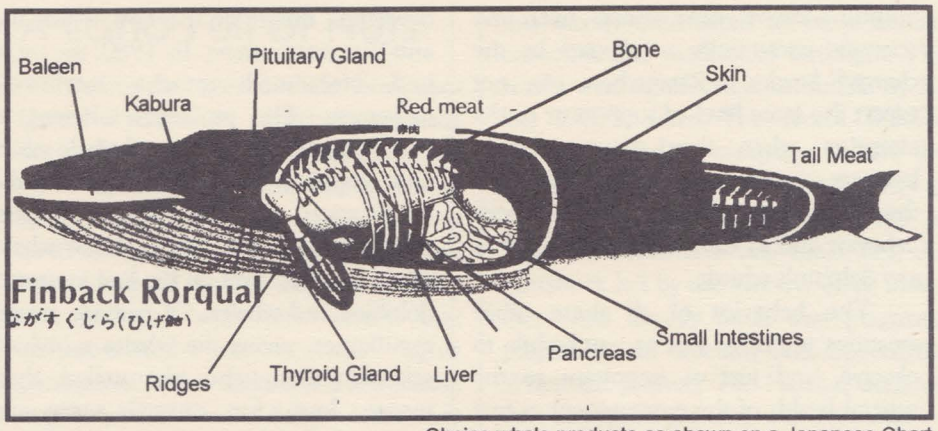
designate Antarctica a whale preserve. Even as politicians jab and parry over the terms of whale preservation, illegal "pirate" whalers hunt several protected species to provide meat for fish markets throughout the Orient.

The Relic Industry

In his epic poem about the horror of whaling, *Whale Nation*, Heathcote Williams devotes several pages to an inventory of products produced from whale parts. Because it is so long, and because so many of the items seem supercilious, the list finally attains the dimensions of a great tragedy, documenting better than any historical account the nearsightedness of human commerce.

For brushes and brooms;
For linoleum;
For medical trusses;
For oil cloth;
For sausage skins;
For drum skins;
For sword hilts and scabbards;
For laces;
For surgical stitches;
For tennis racket strings;
For Riding crops;
For chess-men;
For buttons;
For tanning leather;
For artist's pigments;
For wax crayons;
For For engineering collants;
For golf bags

Whale meat is exceedingly oily, fishy-smelling, and the color of clotted blood. Even when it was readily available in the United States it was never regarded as more than a specialty item. Today whale meat is marketed primarily in Japan, and to a lesser extent in Norway, two places it has always been considered a traditional food. An entree can fetch $150 in a Tokyo restaurant. Norwegians primarily target the fin whale, a species otherwise granted full protection under international law. It doesn't seem to faze them that their outlaw act has provoked an international boycott paralyzing the Norwegian fishing fleet. Nor does it seem to matter that the resource and the market are so diminished, that the relic industry survives only by a steady infusion of government subsidies.



Choice whale products as shown on a Japanese Chart

Their industry must also contend with the guerrilla tactics of Paul Watson's Sea Shepherd Society–the world's only paramilitary group fighting for the rights of another species. This whale war is deadly serious and, in recent years, has resulted in the destruction of two Norwegian whaling ships. Yet the otherwise environmentally sophisticated Norwegians remain implacable, if not jingoistic in their insistence that their national identity is at stake here, a disposition apparently so viscious that it can only be kept alive by slaughtering several hundred endangered fin whales a year. Nor does it seem to matter that fins are nomads, roamers of oceans far beyond Norway's territorial boundaries They are rightly the resource and the responsibility of every country through whose waters they pass.

Marmot Watching

Living whales now provide a viable commercial alternative to killing whales. Worldwide, whalewatching earns as much money today as whaling ever did. A 1992 study disclosed that 3.4 million Americans and 4.4 million people worldwide partook that year, spending over $46 million on tickets and $225 million on related travel expenses. While the industry generally promotes preservation, in a few places its actions flagrantly disregard that message. There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, of a Japanese entrepeneur who owns both a whalewatching and a whaling boat. If his whalewatching skipper sights pilot whales in the morning, there is a fair chance his whaling skipper will be dispatched in the afternoon.

Where I live, on San Juan islands in the Pacific Northwest, whalewatching has become so frenzied that boaters besiege the local orca pods every weekend, all summer long. On the fourth of July, 1996, a hundred motorboats surrounded sixteen orcas for over an hour. Naturally, these consumers buy what touches them. In my town there are orca art galleries selling orca carvings, paintings, coffee cups, cutlery, buttons, glass, mobiles, calendars, cloth ing, all adorned with the image of the black and white totem.

One might well ask why, in my town, there no commensurate harbor seal watching industry, no fast-selling line of sweatshirts silk-screened with murres, no cups adorned with sea urchins, or key-chains showing the threatened yelloweye rockfish which lives up to a hundred years and bears three million live young at a time? In the same vein, why are there are no musicians building studios to play with the exceedingly musical lemurs of Madagascar or the bell birds of Australia as is done with pilot whales off Tenerife and orcas off Vancouver Island? Alaska has no commensurate billion dollar marmot-watching industry. Florida has no tourism based on swimming with turtles. No one makes spiritual pilgrimages to sites in Western Australia where dugongs cavort in the shallows although, many travel to nearby Monkey Mia where bottlenose

dolphins cavort near shore. Even the scientific community is affected by the charged border. Researchers can not expect the same level of support or media attention when they mount elegant language experiment with parrots although the relationship between a parrot's social behavior and its calls seems as evolved as any dolphin's whistle.

The behavior of all these other creatures is just as just as worthwhile to observe, and just as important to the general health of the environment as any whale. When sea lions are spotted preying on salmon in Seattle's Ballard Locks, mountains of paperwork are generated to give officials the option to kill these mammals who are otherwise granted full protection by an act of the US Congress. Yet when orcas in the same vicinity are documented losing weight during the same bad salmon run, op-ed pieces are written proposing that commercial and sports fishing be ended until the orcas recover.

In the Arctic, I once had an experience with a raven which walked up so close to me I could reach out and pet him. He started croaking and cooing in a whispery, soothing tone as if trying to tell me something. I later learned that my experience occurs often enough that many people in the Arctic feel quite certain that ravens possess a language. Yet there are no eco-tours to raven habitats, no raven appreciation societies, no celebrities who travel the workshop circuit lecturing about the deeper meaning of croaks and caws. I have concluded that what the raven lacks is not friendliness, intelligence, or even a willingness to communicate with us, but charisma. By contrast, a recent conference in Brussels brought together twenty organizations and three thousand participants to discuss, not the cetaceans themselves, but the varied ways that humans interact with them.

Elvis Presley

The surge to save-the-whales gathered steam throughout the 1970's. The people who initiated the struggle waged their campaign with passion and conviction, employing the same media tactics developed earlier by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam protests. By 1980, the cause had blossomed into a worldwide movement. The problems inherent in preserving drastically depleted whale stocks *and* stopping the whalers ignited the imagination of scientists, politicians, college students and others. A few whale-savers put their lives on the line to protect dolphins and whales. Of perhaps greater significance, saving the whales mobilized schoolchildren who channelled their innate love for animals into an unprecedented letter-writing campaign in support of a transformation in international wildlife policy. It was a new kind of mass movement: the first international social protest fought entirely in the cause of another species. "Saving the whales" made the politics of extinction front page news.

The beacon that whale lovers shined so brightly on the plight of whales cast light on other ecological issues; rainforest practices, water pollution, human over-population. The organizations that formed to save whales expanded their focus, bonding to form greater coalitions, continually adding converts. The compounding energy gathered momentum and blossomed full-blown by the mid-1980's into what we now refer to as the Environmental Movement. Today, saving the whales is generally regarded as the first major rallying cry of what has become a transformation in human consciousness towards nature.

"If the whales can't save us, nothing can", is a sentiment echoed over and again by environmentalists. Why do we treat this group of animals with such respect? Is it simply that bigger is better or, in the case of dolphins, that we can't resist those vibrant leaps tied to such a happy face? Are these the reasons whalewatchers scream with delight at a humpback siting, why the campaign to adopt orcas sometimes accrues the look and feel of the Elvis Presley Fan Club? Whalewatchers have been known to swoon in the presence of leaping humpbacks like groupies fainting before a movie star who winks in their direction.

Cynics contend that our culture's shallow obsession with celebrity is the only reason that "saving the whales" became the first and the most prolonged rallying cry of the environmental movement. In other words, our admiration is irrational, emotional, stylish, and therefore illegitimate. Some ecologists vouch that environmental healing will never occur until the concern we feel for the celebrity cetaceans includes less glamorous species. If only people loved spotted owls, grizzly bears, snail darters, as they now love cetaceans, how might that affection tip the balance for saving all of nature? But what's the point of moaning? Some species of great whales would be extinct today without that tidal wave of human passion.

Nuke The Whales

The "save the whale movement" portrayed the cetaceans as philosophical guides who could teach us how an advanced mind could flourish in harmony with the Earth. This role is nothing new. The Sumerians, the ancient people of the Indus Valley, and later, the Greeks praised the ability of cetaceans to rejuvenate human culture. According to Homer, Oceanus existed before the gods. Dolphins and the whales lived within Oceanus, which is the precise reason they continue to hold the power of the creator. *Delphys* shares a common root with the words for womb, navel, and birth. Homer praised their wisdom because "they always try to be gratefully useful to human beings."

For much the same reason, cetaceans have emerged as an enduring subject of nature films and magazine articles. Our vision of the smart, friendly cetacean led directly to Flipper, the most popular wild animal TV series of all time. Another boy-meets-cetacean story line named *Free Willy* has become a high grossing film with several sequels. The dolphins' Mona Lisa smile and the humpback whales' gravity-defying leaps compete with pretty female faces as advertising icons on Tokyo kiosks, used to sell solar panels, computers and watches. The message is think smart, be free.

Few dispute that the cetaceans have coalesced a new environmental consciousness. Some whale lovers disagree, however, with the conventional wisdom declaring that cetaceans are mere *passive* recipients of our attention. They

uphold the conclusion of dolphin healers Horace Dobbs, Patricia Saint John, and Joan Ocean who espouse an "energy field" surrounding cetaceans that is so vibrant it transcends symbolism and metaphor. The whales' role is active, transforming the charged border into the place we visit to listen to environmental philosophy and, possibly, get our orders. According to believers, cetaceans are benevolent strategists working within the Gaia-wide network to save us even as we save them.

Those who hold this view assert that from Delphi to the Stellwagen Banks, from Moby Dick to Keiko, from the Aboriginal dolphin dreamtime to the Greenpeace zodiacs, cetaceans have always served humans as friendly arbiters of perception, exerting a subtle but, nonetheless, firm role in transforming the way human beings perceive their place within nature. The symbolism is as mythic as any tale of Oceanus. The message is communal, deeply cultural, not just environmental, not just cetacean-specific. For instance, "Nuke the whales" was a curious anthem of the punk movement of the 1980's, a statement not against whales, but against the perceived excesses of environmental bathos.

Whenever the news sounds like myth, Joseph Campbell's writing is sure to offer guidance. Campbell informs us that myths are active, serving society by highlighting the deepest truths of a culture. This modern myth of the cetaecan-as-Gaian-guide starts with the shapeshifting kinship elaborated by shamans, devolves into the horrors of whaling, sputters as the populations of several species start to collapse, then rises again like a phoenix as people all over the world become aroused to save their once and future kin from extinction. Most who follow the script predict that the whales will indeed be saved if they haven't been already.

As the myth develops into the future, more and more of us are predicted to look to the oceans, and treat our former prey as mentors. The mythmakers insist that the whales have a lot to teach us about compassion, altruism, living at peace with the environment, even etheric energies. The myth ends with these myriad lessons teaching us how to reinvent our own species, save ourselves and the planet.

A Land Full of Nuts

Before the save-the-whale movement ignited a tidal wave of righteous protest during the late 1970's, no animal advocate ever swayed a government body by arguing that a non-human species deserved to exist *on its own behalf*. Few conceived a human relationship to nature beyond resource management, with the result that environmental and animal rights prerogatives had to make sense to a culture implicitly committed to the predominance of the human species as well as to the inherent goodness of progress and resource development.

The whale movement presented us with something original. This was not a human-centered movement. Whale activists were engaged, not for personal gain, but *for* the whales. Their number started out small but deadly earnest, composed of people mostly under thirty who, ten years earlier had embraced the campus protest against the war in Viet Nam. They were roused by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, edified by John Muir, provoked by Edward Abbey, and mobilized by Joan McIntyre's *Mind in the Waters*. They called themselves Project Jonah and Greenpeace. I joined in the second wave and soon found myself in the front line in Japan.

The sensational image of a Russian harpoon soaring over a Greenpeace zodiac and then striking the side of a whale dramatically expanded the movement's influence and numbers. The commando tactics and ethical altruism that initially drove the fray altered as more people became cognizant of a new term, *ecology*, with its essential lesson that nature is a community of interdependent members. Destroy one member, and the whole falters. The original premise of saving whales for their own behalf acquired the urgent addendum of saving ourselves as well. Everyone is intrinsically engaged, even those who act as if it isn't so. Driven by such a compelling wholistic argument, the movement entered the mainstream.

Before "save the whales", only a few idealists and poets talked about nature as sacred. After "save the whales", many more people came to regard natural balance as an authentic challenge to what was always considered to be a human economic and intellectual birthright. The results were significant if not subtle. By the late 1980's, when The World Wildlife Fund mounted its campaign to save the rainforest by treating its ample resources as an entrepreneurial golden land full of marketable nuts and vital medicines, the aftershock left by the save-the-whale movement had already made that pragmatic proposal seem woefully anthropocentric. When the journal, *The Futurist*, declared that ecological posterity was primarily an engineering opportunity—Building better cars and distilling fossil fuels so our great-grandchildren attained better gas mileage and spewed fewer pollutants—the displayed value system seemed only to promote a future without hope.

Owning Our Mentor

When the issue is captivity, agreement about the mentor relationship is far less certain. The oceanarium environment shortens the lives of highly social dolphins and orcas through stress-related diseases provoked by isolation and boredom. How could it be otherwise for vibrant social animals forced to spend their lives swimming in endless circles through chlorinated water? It's an unfair image, shout the oceanarium promoters. This is an educational enterprise. Captive cetaceans serve as ambassadors for wild cetaceans by virtue of their visibility to children.

The protesters avow that oceanariums are actually circuses. How can children be educated about the behavior of wild dolphins when they are shown captive dolphins enacting unnatural behavior such as jumping through hoops? How can children be educated about the degradation of wild stocks by entrepreneurs who degrade wild stocks in the process of capturing dolphins?

Just as great whales have their human militia, so captive cetaceans have their human abolitionists. The best known freedom fighter is Rick O'Barry, who many times has put his life on the line to defeat an oceanarium's expensive capture operation. O'Barry was converted to this

risky vocation while working as the first trainer of the TV star, Flipper. Of his famous student, he concludes:

"Flipper was an illusion, an elaborate fabrication, the work of hundreds of talented people who spent tens of thousands of dollars to create the legend of a fabulous creature combining both actual and imaginary delphoid powers with that of a family pet specially blessed with human intelligence."

The Algae Blooms

Today, whale savers turn their attentions to non-whaling issues that give them common cause with other environmental activists. Pollution from the offshore dumping of garbage is diagnosed as the cause of a chronic die-off of bottlenose dolphins along the US Atlantic coast. Chemical runoff into Quebec's Sanguenay River has devastated the once-large local population of beluga whales, leaving the carcasses so contaminated they are disposed of as toxic waste. Acoustic pollution places whale-savers increasingly at odds with the the US Navy.

In May of 1996, thirteen Cuvier's Beaked whales stranded on the coast of Greece just a day after a Navy sonar test bombarded the area with dangerous levels of low frequency sound. A French cetologist called to the scene wrote, "Although pure coincidence cannot be excluded, it seems improbable the two events were independent." He later concluded that the low frequency tests had injured the whales' inner ears.

In a maneuver that violates every principle of public relations, the navy relocated its low frequency testing to Hawaii's humpback breeding grounds during the height of whalewatching season. During the winter of 1998, the otherwise fully-protected whales were consistently targeted with dangerous levels of sound to determine precisely how they would react. As predicted by most lay critics, a majority of the whales responded by immediately abandoning the sanctuary at the height of the whalewatching season.

Jacques Cousteau spent his later years translating complex environmental problems into terms non-experts, especially children, could readily understand. He predicted that the most urgent environmental problem of the next generation would be dealing with the pervasive human vandalism of this generation. Vandalism is defined as a conscious tampering of the natural order undertaken to satisfy self-interest. Norwegian whalers are vandals. Anheuser Butsch stockholders who subsidize the Oceanaria that snatch juvenile dolphins from their pods are vandals. Chemical company executives who dispose of pollution through pipes open to rivers are vandals. Their act of destruction would be no less unconscionable if they captured every beluga whale in the Sanguenay River and innoculated each one with poison.

Vandalism is often perpetrated by people bewitched by intellect, who sincerely believe the alteration they prompt is more important than what already exists. Teenagers who spray-paint subway cars argue persuasively that they are misunderstood artists. Puget Sound whale-watching entrepreneurs argue persuasively that they are educating the general public.

The scientists directing the Hawaiian low-frequency tests sincerely believed they were helping whales by gathering data on the effects of low frequency sonar the Navy will employ whether the whales are affected or not. The biologists considered themselves good guys, and were embarrassed that so many protesters rallied against them. But they did not quit their test when the whales became stressed.

The Cousteau myth of vandalism is repeated every day on the news. The characters change, the scenery alters so often it blends into an unidentifiable Everywhere. Today it's whales off the Kona coast, tomorrow, its some rainforest no one has ever heard of. Yet if we are conscientious about following the trail of blame, too often we find it leading back to ourselves. As I write these words, I am listening to a radio report of an algae bloom along the Florida coast that has devastated the local marine mammal population. Algae feed on nitrogen and phosphorus. The reporter informs his listeners that the farmers won't be blamed. It assuredly means they will not continue spreading the nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers that keep you and I in winter vegetables.

Friends of Interspecies

We at IC are very excited by a new in-house program for the community of people who support our work. The idea for **Friends of Interspecies** developed from a recent newsletter discussion of past and present IC projects, and ended with a heartfelt plea to members and friends to help us develop a secure network of supporters. IC has been experiencing a financial shortfall for some time now, so I asked our readers directly to aid us in devising strategies to keep this 501(c)(3) tax-deductible organization afloat into the future. Quite honestly, we need help.

Something clicked. Longtime IC supporter and community webworker, Gigi Coyle, responded to the call for a stable base of support by instituting the **Friends of Interspecies Club**. This group consists of people who have always supported our work in theory, and now are being solicited to help us attain longterm financial stability.

Gigi's superb effort drew in seven individuals, each of whom pledged $1000 a year to IC over the next three years. An eighth person gave us a one time $1000 donation. A ninth has pledged an open-ended donation.

The success of the initial call for support affirms that people are indeed willing to help us keep functioning if we ask for their help in a spirit that invites giving. Now we seek more club members willing to grant a minimum $1000 for three or more years. Your donation can take the form of cash, or much needed in-kind donations—mostly of computer equipment or boat rentals. All contributions are tax-deductible.

I invite all readers to search their heart and pocket book to contemplate whether the **Friends of Interspecies Club** is a financial possibility. If so, please correspond with us, and we will respond directly to discuss the organization's objectives, and needs. I sincerely hope to hear from a few of you. Email us at :

beluga@rockisland.com

An IC Project

Alaska July '98.

When certain humpback whales sing their species' evocative courtship songs in the southern waters of Hawaii and Bermuda, , the rendition is of such a high quality that it sometimes attracts admirers who draw close to listen. This suggests that the concepts of **audience** and **performance** are not just human behaviors. It also leaves open the distinct possibility that humpbacks have developed a musical aesthetic which is interpreted best by whales possessed of genuine talent who can only be considered the **musicians** of the species. This thesis offers several good reasons why IC is so interested in working with humpbacks.

In Alaska, humpbacks don't court one other, but they do sing a similar song as a kind of lunch bell informing one another to join together for cooperative feeding. Some scientists speculate that one variation of the song may even serve as a kind of weapon to stun their prey.

This will be our third summer spent on the water in southeast Alaska in the vicinity of one of the largest aggregations of humpback whales in the world. We have had some amazing interactions with these animals who seem to respond to our music more sensitively than any other animal species.

This particular field project has developed as a unique collaboration between IC sponsored artists and musicians working together with the biologists of The Pacific Whale Foundation (PWF) under the able guidance of behavioralist Fred Sharpe.

This July we'll add another important increment to the mix. Canadian film maker, Patricia Sims, has produced music videos and recently won some significant awards for her film about dolphins in captivity. This winter, she has started working with IC and PWF to produce a very original whale film.

The premise revolves around a conversation between Fred and IC's Jim Nollman which will serve as the film's sound track. Some of the subjects discussed include:

1. How is it that biologists easily get federal permits to shoot arrows into whales to pull flesh samples, but when musicians try to get the same permits to play music with whales the projects are always rejected as harassment?

2. Do whales attract barnacles or do barnacles attract whales?

3. Why is whalewatching such big business all over the world, but there's no commensurate northern phalarope watching business, or sea turtle watching business?

4. Does the world really need another whale film?

The footage used is mostly of humpback whales in their own environment and interacting with other animals including humans. Unlike most film productions, Patricia will rely on digital video footage already shot over the past three years by the PWF crew. These images will be manipulated in several novel ways, including time lapsed, repeated, kaleidoscoped, fast cut, and may include animated footage to match the perceptual issues tackled in the dialogue.

Stay tuned.

Reviews

Nature's Life Lessons

Jim Carrier and Marc Bekoff
Fulcrum Publishing
Golden CO, 1996

If only more authors realized that a brevity of form often informs the most profound ideas. The best of this brief-and-profound literary genre are the ones we usually discover in a little rack placed next to the toilet. Carrier and Bekoff's book is a cute and miniature tour de force. It takes examples of plant and animal behaviors from hundreds of different species and condenses each down to a one-liner. The result is a very satisfying anthropomorphic nightmare, and certainly one of the more instructive animal books I've read this year.

...Whether you win, lose, or marry can depend on how well you blow bubbles. (humpback whale)

...The more babies you have, the more enemies you'll encounter (bird)

...Double your weight before winter (ground squirrel)

...Losing your mind? Grow another. (earthworm)

...If you're really hungry, eat yourself. (sea anemone)

Escape from Affluenza

A PBS Show in two parts
July 2 @10 PM and 7 @ 9 PM

This space started out as a review of Real Goods, a commendable mail order company that focuses on alternative energy products. Then I got the Affluenza brochure in the mail, and I couldn't resist swapping out a plug to buy helpful products for another plug to buy no products at all. One of the producers suggests the first week of July as "independence from stuff week". Sounds healthy, like what Buddhist monks already do or what 1/4 of the planet does during Muslim holy week. More time spent in the garden. If everyone reading this newsletter does it, how much do we cumulatively change the world? A little bit at a time, thank you very much.

..."Affluenza" is the name coined for the epidemic of rampant consumerism and materialism ailing Americans. Its symptoms include record levels of personal debt and bankruptcy, fractured families, chronic stress, and overwork.

...Evy McDonald, a hospital administrator who discovers she has a terminal disease, asks a poignant question, "Who do I want to be when I die?" How would you answer this question? Are you that person now?